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# THE SCHOOL REVIEW

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## OUTLOOK NOTES

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Is THE commercial education of the future to be public or private in its nature? In other words, shall we leave commercial education to private enterprise, or shall we make it a part of the state-supported system of education? There can be no doubt that the private commercial schools will gradually improve to meet the demand for a better product, but they are absolutely dependent upon their income from pupils for their existence, and they will not be able to take a high advanced stand, even though they desire to, nor to lead in the development of commercial education, for leadership is always costly; the followers at first are few. If we could have great endowed commercial schools as we have endowed colleges and universities, we might perhaps leave the matter in private hands. There doubtless always will be private schools for special classes and particular purposes. This is, however, not the way in which as a nation we deal with educational problems. While we freely accord to the private school the honor due for providing for those special cases which never can be met in any great public system, it is totally un-American to depend upon private schools for the occupation of any large field of instruction. We have undertaken to provide at public expense that famous ladder from the gutter to the university. The old definition of a university as a place where nothing

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useful is taught is certainly not an American definition at the threshold of the twentieth century. Since the university, therefore, has become an institution where any person can secure instruction in any study, must we not have all kinds of ladders, or else one remarkably flexible extension-ladder up which any person can climb into any window of the university? We have provided in our public-school system for every educational demand that has so far arisen with the single exception of the demand for commercial education. Even that has already been met in part in the public school, and it is inconceivable that it alone shall be excluded when all other literary, technical, and professional fields are freely admitted.

If we grant that the public-school system is to provide a commercial education for the country, we immediately meet the question, Shall this provision be made through the addition of new courses in the schools already existing, or by the erection of new and special schools? The answer which this country has given so far to every question of this kind that has been raised is, that there must be one democratic school where all branches of study meet as peers, and to which students with all tastes and aptitudes may come and find adequate provision for their needs and aspirations. We have done more than any other country in the world to break down the old notion of an aristocracy of learning, the notion that some studies are holy and sacred, and some others, which perhaps more vitally concern human progress, are common and unclean. We have inserted into our university, into our college, into our secondary-school program of studies every new science which has arisen to enrich or beautify human life. It would certainly seem strange if we were now to reverse this time-honored policy. To classify different subjects of study into humanistic, realistic, technical, business, manual training, and so on, and then upon this theorist's dream to erect a separate and distinct institution for each of the supposedly separate and distinct lines of human development, is intellectually undemocratic; it is

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EXISTING  
SCHOOLS.**

more than that, it is politically undemocratic. It is the method which has been followed in Germany and, to a large extent, in England, France, and the other European countries. To take the most striking example, Germany, anyone at all familiar with conditions there will realize that it is only the graduate of the classical gymnasium who has the stamp of intellectual aristocracy upon him. Those who go to the other schools are regarded as of distinctly lower social rank. Our universities and colleges have already definitely arrayed themselves upon the side of the American and democratic solution of the question; witness the various higher courses in commerce and politics which have sprung up within the last few years. The chief legitimate argument against the incorporation of commercial courses into the existing secondary schools is based upon two considerations which deserve attention. The first is that as a new subject commercial education will not attract public attention unless it is concretely embodied in a centrally located, magnificently equipped high school of its own. A great commercial high school all by itself is, in other words, to be a standing object lesson to the community. And the second reason, closely correlated with this, is that if the commercial courses are introduced into the existing high schools, which are, for the most part, strongly classical in their tendencies, the commercial courses will meet with opposition from the principal and from most of the teachers, that pupils will consequently be discouraged from taking them, that they will be slighted if any department of the school is slighted, and that the department of commercial education will not have a fair field and no favor.

As to having one splendid centrally located institution which shall serve as an object-lesson in the community, that sounds rather fine in theory, but what will its result be, practically, in a great city like Chicago or New York? Chicago today has some sixteen high schools, so that no boy or girl in even the most remote part of the city is at so great a distance from some school as to make the physical difficulties of attendance any

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OBJECT  
LESSON.**

considerable barrier. Such education as the high school affords is brought to the doors of all. A central institution would be simply an institution which was removed far away from the doors of all. The physical difficulties and actual expense in money of attendance would be in many cases sufficient to prevent the very students who ought to have its advantages from securing them. The theory of the high school is that it is the people's college. Every college draws chiefly from its immediate environment, so does every university, so do the high schools. It seems, therefore, to be opposed to every ground upon which high schools are maintained to locate one branch of what we agreed to recognize as legitimate high-school work in a distant building, far from the greater part of the population. Moreover, such a policy is manifestly impossible in smaller communities where but one institution of high-school rank can be maintained.

As to the theory that the commercial courses would not get a fair show in the existing high schools, I have this to say : Such an assumption is very nearly an insult to the fair-mindedness, progressiveness, intelligence, and public spirit of the high-school principals and teachers of this country. I have myself visited a number of high schools where the principal is a classical scholar and a thorough believer in classical training, and yet where a thorough commercial course is maintained, evidently standing on a wholly self-respecting and generally respected basis, obviously with the full sympathy and hearty approval of the principal. Only a very small minority of the high-school principals of today in these great states of ours have survived to us from the paleolithic age. Moreover, it is, I believe, an absolutely unjustifiable imputation against classical training to assume that it should so bias those who have enjoyed its benefits that they are incapable of taking a sympathetic and fair attitude toward the pressing problems of the day. By far the majority of those who are leading in all the lines of education, scientific, commercial, professional, have been classically trained ; and unless the whole supposition, the whole theory of classical culture as a liberalizing

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influence has been and is totally and absolutely wrong; unless all the progress which has been made in the past has been made in spite of the educators, then we are not justified in assuming that commercial education will have no chance in our existing high schools because, forsooth, a considerable number of our high-school principals and teachers are classical scholars. It is time that the classical teachers rose in armed resistance against the continued imputation to them of such narrowness, bigotry, and intolerance. It might have been true of classical men two hundred years ago, but it is not true of the graduates of our great classical universities and colleges today.

The proper solution of this part of the problem is to incorporate commercial courses as a part of the program of studies in every high school, so far as the means provided by the public permit. The abolition of clearly differentiated courses is proceeding very rapidly in the high schools, as it has practically reached completion in the colleges and universities. The ideal and the real high-school program of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow will consist of courses of study which shall include in addition to all that is already there, such branches as commercial geography, history of industries, money and banking, transportation, and the like, from which program the individual student may and shall select, with the advice and coöperation of parents and teachers, a curriculum which may be purely classical, or purely scientific, or purely commercial, or which may include a few commercial studies along with a preponderating influence of the older culture studies, but which shall in each case, as nearly as may be, suit the special needs of the individual in question. The movement toward differentiating high schools in our large cities has already gone too far; it is undemocratic, un-American, unpedagogical. By what right shall we say to the children in the south part of the city that they may attend a classical high school? to the children on the north that they may attend a scientific high school? to the children on the east that they may attend a manual-training high school? and to the children on the

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west that they may attend a commercial high school? We have been a century trying to abolish sectionalism in politics, let us not spend the next century building up sectionalism in education!

This problem is essentially the old one of, Which was first, the chicken or the egg? Applied to our question, it resolves itself into this: Shall we wait to establish commercial **WHERE WILL THE TEACHERS COME FROM** courses until we have a supply of trained teachers, or shall we establish the courses and run the risk of their being discredited because teachers are not prepared to teach them properly? We have the history of scientific instruction in secondary schools as a warning beacon; a great wave of enthusiasm for scientific study swept over this country some years ago, and nearly every school put in biology, or physics, or chemistry, or all of them and more too, with inadequate equipment, imperfect conceptions of the nature of the work and teachers with no special scientific training. The result was that scientific teaching in the secondary schools was discredited, put upon the defensive, and for a time greatly crippled and hampered. Yet, today in spite of that period of panic, there is no more prosperous branch of education in the country than the scientific. Which comes first, supply or demand? Is it at all likely, as a practical question, that an ample supply of special teachers in commercial geography, history of industries, transportation, and such new subjects, will be developed before an obvious market is established? On the other hand, have we not already at hand the apparatus for rapidly equipping teachers in these new branches as the demand arises? Our teachers are exceedingly adaptable. We have teachers' colleges, extension courses, and above all, summer courses in which a capable teacher may go a long way toward supplying special preparation needed for some new duty to be undertaken. Further than that, we have colleges of commerce and politics in our universities which are bound to attract a number of students who prefer teaching to commercial life. Then, too, in many institutions we have schools of law, and preparatory to

these schools of laws there are special courses in college in politics, economics, sociology, and in other higher commercial branches. In conversation with a professor of law in such an institution not long ago, he said that he welcomed with enthusiasm the prospective general establishment of commercial courses in secondary schools as affording a career for many law-school graduates who were well fitted by their preliminary college studies and their law training for such teaching, and who were best adapted for the life of a teacher and would prefer it to the life of a lawyer at the bar. If we raise the question whether we shall introduce these courses gradually or all at once, the answer is sure to be according to local conditions. It may be granted that a grand, monumental school is better adapted to the complete introduction of commercial courses, will better facilitate the springing of the commercial school full-panoplied into action, than will the introduction of such courses into our regular high-school program. But is there any legitimate objection to the introduction of such courses gradually, adding one to another as the results justify and as the demand requires? It will certainly be easier to secure one good commercial teacher in one or two special lines than half a dozen. Teachers will be found as they are needed, not as good as they ought to be at first, but they will not be developed at all unless they are needed, for nature in the physical world and in the world of human activity has never been accused of evolving organs to meet a non-existent environment.

In presenting these suggestions, my purpose has been to draw special attention to some of the very definite problems of organization which immediately present themselves to the practical organizer when he comes to consider this question, and to indicate lines which, in my judgment, will lead to fruitful results. It seems to me that the day is past when one who discusses this question sincerely and earnestly is in danger of being reproached with mere utilitarianism and of being exiled beyond the pale of true and high educational thought. It is surely high

**FILL IN THE  
CHASM  
BETWEEN  
EDUCATION  
AND LIFE**



time that the gulf between theory and practice, the chasm between the utilitarian and the cultural, the yawning abyss between the liberal and the technical, the spatial void between education and life, should be not merely bridged over, but filled in. It is time to recognize that education is not only preparation for life, but that it is life ; that the life that now is is the life that shall be ; that what the children are in the schools, that they will remain when they grow up. We have had far too many imaginary dead lines in education. The world is not all mind, life is not all discipline, and it is time here and now for the educator to accept fully and practice highly the doctrine that to him nothing that is human is common or unclean.

CHARLES H. THURBER